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ABSTRACT

This document is the result of a conference of university administrators and faculty and representatives of professional associations, private foundations, and civic organizations called to formulate strategies that can prepare students for responsible citizenship in a diverse democracy and to engage faculty members in developing and utilizing knowledge for the improvement of society. The declaration examines civic responsibilities of research universities and issues a call to higher education institutions to go beyond service-learning experiences and community-oriented research to renew their mission as agents of democracy. The declaration sees deep strategic challenges in finding ways to tap and free the talents of faculty, students, staff, and administrators for public engagement. The declarations suggests university curricula that challenge students' imaginations and co-curricular activities, both on and off campus, that offer opportunities for students to become engaged in community projects. It suggests that faculty help create, participate in, and take responsibility for public culture at their institutions; that staff build upon and receive recognition for local community ties; that administrators articulate the philosophical and intellectual meaning of research universities as agents of democracy; and that institutions develop admissions policies and financial arrangements that create diverse "publics" within institutions. Appended is a list of participants. (JM)

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on

Renewing

the Civic Mission of the American Research University

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1

HE 032 593

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Wingspread Declaration
on
Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University

by
Harry Boyte and Elizabeth Hollander
on behalf of participants in a Wingspread conference

This document is the result of collaboration by participants at a Wingspread conference involving university presidents, provosts, deans, and faculty members with extensive experience in higher education as well as representatives of professional associations, private foundations, and civic organizations. The purpose of the conference was to formulate strategies for renewing the civic mission of the research university, both by preparing students for responsible citizenship in a diverse democracy, and also by engaging faculty members to develop and utilize knowledge for the improvement of society.

The Wingspread conference was held December 11–13, 1998. At the end of the conference, participants formed working groups and committed themselves to action strategies for renewing the civic mission. They reconvened for a second conference on July 19–21, 1999.

The conference was coordinated by the University of Michigan Center for Community Service and Learning, with sponsorship by the Association of American Universities, American Association for Higher Education, American Council on Education, Association of American Colleges and Universities, Campus Compact, New England Resource Center for Higher Education, University of Pennsylvania Center for University Partnerships, and the Johnson Foundation, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Wingspread is an international educational conference center designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and maintained by the Johnson Foundation in Racine, Wisconsin.

The Civic Responsibilities of Research Universities

Civic engagement is essential to a democratic society, but far too many Americans have withdrawn from participation in public affairs. Higher education can contribute to civic engagement, but most research universities do not perceive themselves as part of the problem or of its solution. Whereas universities were once centrally concerned with "education for democracy" and "knowledge for society," today's institutions have often drifted away from their civic mission.

At the same time, however, there are new stirrings of democracy in American higher education. From one campus to another, there is increasing interest in efforts to better prepare people for active citizenship in a diverse democracy, to develop knowledge for the improvement of communities and society, and to think about and act upon the public dimensions of our educational work.

What are some strategies for renewing the civic mission of the American research university? This question was the focus of a conference of higher education leaders at Wingspread that produced the following declaration about the renewal process. We are indebted to Barry Checkoway of the University of Michigan, Elizabeth Hollander of Campus Compact, and Stanley Ikenberry of the American Council on Education for preparing an initial draft, and to Harry Boyte of the University of Minnesota and Elizabeth Hollander for their leadership roles in preparing the final statement.

> "At bottom, most of the American institutions of higher education are filled with the democratic spirit. Teachers and students alike are profoundly moved by the desire to serve the democratic community."
>
> Charles Eliot, President, Harvard, 1908

Across the country a historic debate is underway over the future of America's great public and research universities. From many sources, including state legislatures, governing boards, public constituencies, and the mass media, research institutions are challenged to justify what they do and how they do it. The beliefs and practices that universities have espoused, affecting research, teaching, and outreach, are under review, spurred by calls for accountability, efficiency, and utility as well as by questions about the theories of knowledge embedded in prevailing reward and evaluation systems. The controversies of this debate also reflect trends and questions in higher education as a whole.

At their broadest and most engaged, research institutions of higher education in America have been, in Charles Eliot's words, "filled with the democratic spirit." Such spirit took many different forms. Columbia University, according to Seth Low, breathed the air of the city of New York, its working class population, its problems, and its opportunities. At the University of Chicago, America's pragmatic philosophy and world-renown sociology department emerged, in part, from vital partnerships between the Hull House settlement and scholars. At land grant institutions, the cooperative extension system of county agents saw itself as "building rural democracy" and helping to develop communities' capacities for cooperative

action. As late as 1947, the President's Commission on Higher Education titled its report, *Education for Democracy.*

In the post war years, American research universities have seen an explosion in numbers of students, in fields of study, and in international prestige. Questions of diversity and justice, issues of who universities choose to admit and serve are central to the democratic spirit. On these grounds our schools have made clear advances. Today, research universities are more richly varied in the cultures, economic backgrounds, and outlooks of our students. Our curricula are more inclusive of diverse cultures, traditions, and ways of knowing. Fields of research and scholarship have proliferated, and path-breaking advances have been made in areas scarcely imagined a generation or two ago. Research universities today evidence renewed engagements with communities. Many have joined the service-learning movement that involves students in real world problems and issues.

Few leaders in research universities today would make [the] claim that their fundamental mission is to serve democracy or that they are filled with the democratic spirit.

Though incomplete, such changes nonetheless represent substantial progress toward a more inclusive and a more just system of higher education. Yet despite such gains, few leaders in research universities today would make Eliot's claim that their fundamental mission is to serve democracy or that they are filled with the democratic spirit.

Today, higher education mirrors the democratic discontents of the larger society. Nowhere is this truer than in our great research universities. T.S. Eliot's haunting question in his 1937 poem *The Rock*—"where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge, where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"—has become a question for our age.

Research institutions are subject to the same forces in the society that focus on "efficiency of means" and neglect continuing discussion about civic purposes and public meanings of our individual and collective work. Ends are regarded as fixed. Even when debated they are separated from the larger tasks of democracy.

Such dynamics take the form of proposals to make colleges more responsive to the demands of students redefined as customers. Allocations of resources are pushed toward their most remunerative uses with a slighting of other institutional values. A powerful new trend is the "virtual university." Public service today often has a commercial cast. All of these developments can have value as parts of a larger whole. But they cannot be taken for the whole. Students are far more than "customers"; they need to be understood as co-creators of their learning. Universities are far more than data banks for distance learning; they are places where students, faculty, and staff interact in multi-dimensional ways and, at best, learn and develop together. And communities are far more than sites of economic growth; they are places where a variety of public and private values need articulation, recognition, and cultivation.

As agents of the democracy, colleges and universities will consciously prepare a next generation of involved citizens reflecting the full and immensely varied cultural and economic mix of America, by creating innumerable opportunities for them to be in college and to do the work of citizenship. This means conceiving of institutions of higher learning as vital, living cultures, not simply an aggregation of discrete units in competition with each other. The public dimensions of our common cultures require intense and self-conscious attention. Opportunities for students, faculty, staff, administrators to use their many talents for the greater good must once again pervade every aspect of our work.

Yet today, many students feel that college is out of their grasp and those who are in college often feel disengaged and powerless. They find few opportunities for civic participation. Every department, every discipline, every unit of our research universities experiences pressures to draw back from connection to the whole. Cultures of research-oriented schools have become increasingly competitive, individualist, and characterized by the "star system." Faculty identities are drawn away from the local civic community and toward national and international disciplinary and sub-disciplinary reference groups. Moreover, faculties are socialized throughout their graduate school preparation to think in highly individualized and privatized terms about their work in ways that make it difficult to believe in the possibilities for effective cooperative action for change.

Despite these trends and pressures, many faculty devote themselves to the pressing tasks of our commonwealth and seek out colleagues, inside and outside their disciplines, to work with in their efforts. We need a far ranging examination of our purposes and practices so that such work is honored, celebrated, and built upon.

The Challenge

Against this background, we issue this Wingspread Declaration based on the conviction that now is the time to boldly claim the authority and ability to focus our energy on the civic purposes of higher education. Those of us in higher education can change its directions and commitments. We can mobilize support for change from outside constituencies by making alliances with those constituencies. We can shape our cultures, renew our civic missions, and guide our destinies.

The challenges facing higher education go beyond the need to add more service-learning experiences or to reward faculty for community-oriented research. As important as these objectives are, the more fundamental task is to renew our great mission as the agents of democracy. This task points to deep strategic challenges: how to tap and free the powers and talents of all elements of our schools—our faculty, our students, our staff, our administrators—for public engagement? How to break down the artificial and arbitrary "silo cultures" that now stifle creativity, connection, and community? How to renew throughout our institutional life and cultures a robust sense that our work contributes to the commonwealth of our communities, our nation and the world?

How might this vision of public engagement be made manifest? It will take many different forms in different universities. Here we suggest some ways that an engaged university will embody its mission.

Now is the time to boldly claim the authority and ability to focus our energy on the civic purposes of higher education.

1. Students

What will it mean for our student bodies to be filled once again with the democratic spirit?

A. A core element in the mission of the research university is to prepare students for engaged citizenship through multiple opportunities to do the work of citizenship. Such work involves real projects of impact and relevance, through which students learn the skills, develop the habits and identities, and acquire the knowledge to contribute to the general welfare. 3

B. The university curricula and courses challenge students' imaginations, draw on student experiences and interests, and cultivate students' talents and public identities. This means sustained attention to how our curricula help to develop civic competencies and civic habits. These include the arts of public argument, civic imagination, the ability to critically evaluate arguments and information, the capacities and curiosity to listen constantly, interest in and knowledge of public affairs, capacities for intergroup dialogue, and the ability to work with others different from themselves on common projects and problem solving in ways that deepen appreciation of others' talents.

C. Campus co-curricular activities on and off campus offer multiple opportunities for students to get engaged in community projects that enhance the civic welfare and common good, to register to vote, and to participate actively in political campaigns and other change-oriented activities. Further, such activities create space for constant reflection about how such experiences might shape their future careers and life work.

D. Students help build and sustain genuinely public cultures full of conversation, argument, and discussion about the meaning of their learning, their work, and their institutions as a whole. Students encounter and learn from others different from themselves in experience, culture, racial background, ideologies and views.

E. Students have multiple opportunities to help create knowledge and do scholarship relevant to and grounded in the public problems of society, while learning rigorous methodologies and the demanding crafts of fine scholarship.

2. Faculty (including teaching staff)

What will it mean for the faculty to be filled with the democratic spirit?

A. Faculty help create, participate in, and take responsibility for a vibrant public culture at their institutions. Such a public culture values their moral and civic imaginations and their judgments, insights, and passions, while it recognizes and rewards their publicly engaged scholarship, lively teaching, and their contributions through public work.

B. Faculty members have opportunities and rewards for socially engaged scholarship through genuine civic partnerships, based on respect and recognition of different ways of knowing and different kinds of contributions, in which expertise is "on tap, not on top."

C. Faculty teaching includes community-based learning and undergraduate action research that develops substantive knowledge, cultivates practical skills, and strengthens social responsibility and public identity for citizenship in a diverse democratic society.

D. Faculties' professional service is conceived of and valued as public work in which disciplinary and professional knowledge and expertise contributes to the welfare of society, and also can occasion the public work of many other citizens.

E. Faculty members are encouraged and prepared when they desire to pursue "public scholarship," relating their work to the pressing problems of society, providing consultations and expertise, and creating opportunities to work with community and civic partners in co-creating things of public value.

F. Faculty members engage in diverse cross-disciplinary work projects that improve the university and create things of lasting value and significance.

G. Faculty are encouraged to mentor students, providing out-of-classroom opportunities to build communities of learning on and off campus. These opportunities have the potential to expose students to the public work of faculty whose own moral imaginations and public talents are vitally engaged in relevant scholarship and work of social significance.

3. Staff

What will it mean for staff to be filled with the democratic spirit?

A. Staff, in association with institutions, make visible their multiple (and now largely invisible) experiences, talents, and contributions to student learning and to the community-building process at institutions of higher education. Further, their rich contributions to the broader intellectual enterprise of our institutions become more visible and recognized.

B. Staff build upon and receive recognition for the often extensive ties that many have with the local community, seeing such community knowledge and connection as a resource for community-university partnerships, for student learning, for engaged scholarship, and for the broad intellectual life of the institution.

C. Staff gain a voice in governance, receive fair salaries and benefits, and are encouraged to participate in ongoing intellectual conversation and public life. The staff assist in the creation of multiple opportunities for staff development and continuing education.

D. Faculty and others come to recognize that educating students for democracy is an institution-wide enterprise in which staff play key roles in providing opportunities for public work, dialogue with others far different from oneself, and democratic practice on campus. Staff are encouraged to work with faculty to examine and change the campus culture to support engagement.

4. Administrators

What will it mean for administrative leaders to be filled with the democratic spirit?

A. It will mean that the president and other leaders give consistent and sustained voice to the broad public purposes of our institutions. This will involve articulating the philosophical and intellectual meaning of research universities as agents of democracy, helping to highlight the specific and unique quality and character of their particular institutions, and making visible the public work and contributions of faculty, staff, and students.

B. Administrators take leadership in creating institutions that evolve to reflect changing demographics and to engage the diverse cultures of our places and our world. This leadership includes promoting hiring policies to achieve broad representation and social diversity among faculty members and administrative staff, not simply out of moral imperative but out of full recognition that a diversity of backgrounds, cultures, and views is essential to a vital public culture within our institutions.

C. Administrators create and improve infrastructures that sustain creativity, flexibility, and public contribution in many forms, and develop mechanisms for a continuing process of collective self-examination and reflection on organizational learning.

D. Administrators support and create multiple opportunities to develop the public leadership skills and capacities of diverse members of the institution.

5. The institution

What will it mean for our institutions, comprised of faculty, students, staff, and administrators and guided by the deliberations of trustees, to be filled with the democratic spirit as whole institutions?

A. This will mean that our institutions develop admissions policies and financial arrangements that are shaped by the imperative to create diverse "publics" within our institutions. This imperative understands economic, ethnic, racial, religious, and

ideological diversity to be a crucial ingredient in learning cultures for the world that is emerging.

B. Trustees, like administrators, think of themselves as public philosophers as well as stewards and promoters of institutional resources, seeking to articulate and to advance the public and democratic purposes of higher education.

C. Stakeholders in our universities define institutional work as a whole in ways that highlight civic mission broadly, that tie work to large public questions and issues, and that unearth distinctive civic histories, cultures, and contributions. In this context, part of the challenge is for leaders, at all levels, to develop a variety of infrastructures of support, including multidimensional understandings of "scholarship" in promotion and tenure procedures for faculty work that serves its civic mission. Such support includes creating high standards, demanding expectations, and rigorous methods of evaluation of engaged scholarship, teaching, and public work.

D. The university creates and sustains long-term partnerships with communities, with K-12 schools in an integrated system of democratic education and education for democracy, and with a range of civic bodies. These will be framed in ways that reflect the university's commitments to and self-interests in community building and civic vitality, that integrate community experience into the learning of students and the professional service opportunities for staff, and that fully reflect the public dimensions of scholarly work.

E. The university promotes public understanding of its work as an essential part of its mission, recognizing an institutional responsibility for publicly useable knowledge, developing formal structures to sustain such uses.

F. The university similarly creates structures that generate a more porous and interactive flow of knowledge between university and communities. These aim at making the university's knowledge more accessible to communities, and constantly informing university scholarship with the experiences, knowledge, and public issues that arise from the life of communities. Such structures might include public forums co-created with community partners that enliven public cultures and conversations in locales; infrastructures of support for public scholarship based on a partnership model between university and community and civic groups; and efforts to disseminate exciting scholarship and findings.

Making democracy come alive

Research universities and leaders from all levels of our institutions need to rise to the occasion of our challenge as a democracy on the edge of a new millennium. We need to help catalyze and lead a national campaign or movement that reinvigorates the public purposes and civic mission of our great research universities and higher education broadly. We need to renew for the next century the idea that our institutions of higher education are, in a vital sense, both agents and architects of a flourishing democracy, bridges between individuals' work and the larger world.

In this spirit and to these ends, we call upon all associations, professions, disciplines, faculty bodies, employee associations, and student organizations related to research universities and higher education to consider these questions, to debate, revise, and expand these propositions, and to join with us in renewing the civic mission of American higher education. Our challenge in a time of change is to transform knowledge into wisdom and to make democracy come alive, for ourselves and for those who follow after us.

Wingspread Conference Participants

The following people participated in the Wingspread conference on December 11–13, 1998:

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